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ederalism

of frontier regions

the years. In so doing, they can build on traditions which reach back into history. In Basle, for example, residual contacts were kept up even during the Nazi period with its hermetic sealing of the frontier – although what happened was surrounded by the deepest secrecy.

It is unfortunate that we did not use the fat years of prosperity which preceded the lean years more effectively to

Oskar Reck

prepare for the future. Economic greed and political fortress thinking overshadowed the whole scene, and even today we have the greatest difficulty imaginable in opening ourselves up on a neighbourly basis. It is truly no coincidence that frontier regions are called upon to play a special role in this dilemma. For they are the real national pioneers in this respect, and it remains to be seen whether and how much they will be able to take the other regions of the country with them.

This consideration leads us to take a closer look at developments on the domestic scene. We see that if our political life still appears virtually motionless, the social fabric of our small country is undergoing a transformation, and this is taking place in the context of movements outside our frontiers. It can be only a question of time before this social transformation spills over into political life, and the result will be to shake the bastions of nationalism to their foundations. Such a process would vibrate right across the country.

Even if all this takes place, it will still be up to the frontier regions to make the decisive breakthrough. However much the original forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden have contributed to the heroic founding myths, it is the peripheral regions like those of Geneva and Basle which have the greatest importance for the future – on condition, that is, that they take their mission seriously.

No loss of identity

In the long run, frontiers can be dismantled only by those who live on ei-

ther side of them – by the people who have had to live with such barriers in the past. It is not only legal measures which are needed for this, but also practical experience in good neighbourly behaviour. Frontier regions are the last ones which should fear loss of identity, since they have always been accustomed to meeting foreigners – and they know that they have gained from the experience and never lost.

For Switzerland's peripheral regions, the extent to which we are able to release federalism from its petrified state will be of great significance. However obvious it is that our member states

should look towards the centre for inspiration, it is just as imperative that the frontier regions should persist in opening up our small country to the world. This is also part of foreign policy, and our government should not be afraid to delegate some small part of its authority – in this case to those who are most at home with the problem. This would imply federalism at the functional level instead of in terms of physical territory. If a political renovation process of this kind should be successful, much would have been won for the future of our country. ■

Interview with Fernando Pedrolini

“Taking steps now for future generations”

Fernando Pedrolini, the mayor of Chiasso, has long been committed to cross-border cooperation. In an interview with Swiss Review, he talks about problems and progress in the “Regio Insubrica” – a name which goes back to the Celtic settlements of Upper Lombardy in the last centuries B.C.

Swiss Review: Mr. Pedrolini, since 1988 you have been mayor of Chiasso, which is a really typical border town. This certainly explains your interest for cross-border questions, as expressed in the idea of the “Regio Insubrica” which you have launched.

Fernando Pedrolini: Two preliminary remarks. There are other cross-border structures in Switzerland, the “Regio Basiliensis” being one example, and in 1980 the Treaty of Madrid on cross-border cooperation was signed – leading in February 1990 to a bilateral agreement between Switzerland and Italy. It became clear that Ticino would have to base its policies on overcoming national frontiers and that joint interests would have to be identified. This meant that in-

struments would have to be created for bringing about prosperity for the region as a whole. I am thinking here in terms of settling territorial questions, working out transport concepts, providing jobs and promoting culture and the local economy. As to the future, it is my declared aim to establish during the current year what I have called the “Regio Insubrica”, which will at least include the areas which have already given their assent: Canton Ticino, the province of Como and the city of Verbania, which is to be the capital of the new Italian province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola.

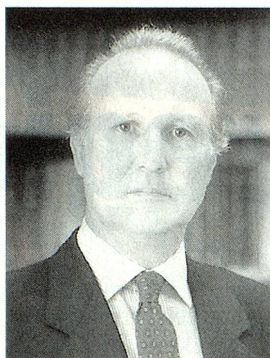
Alongside implementing this ambitious idea, there is of course everyday life to be considered with all its very concrete problems. How does Chiasso's cross-border policy work out in practical terms?

Chiasso has always been in close contact with Italy. We exchange goods, persons, services and ideas with this very important European country. Contacts between Chiasso and Como take place on a permanent basis, both in

the form of regular meetings between town councils and in implementing joint projects. The latter includes regulations for cross-frontier commuters, public transport links and regular cultural exchanges.

You are the mayor of a town which – like Canton Ticino and Switzerland as a whole – voted against entry into the European Economic Area. Is your idea of the “Regio Insubrica” a reaction to this decision?

My idea of the “Regio Insubrica” existed before that negative referendum result on the EEA, even if it was “officialised” only afterwards. The preparation of the required documents and statutes



Fernando Pedrolini, Chiasso's mayor. (Photo: zvg.)

and their dispatch to the presidents of the Ticino cantonal government and the provinces of Como, Varese and Novara

took place in February 1993. It is certainly true that in present circumstances the “Regio Insubrica” seems to be more necessary than ever – urgent might even be the right word. We must take steps now for the present and future generations, and the right environment must be created. Also, it should not be forgotten that cross-border policies assist the general coming together of peoples regardless of national origin – which fits in with the need for harmonisation which is so widely felt today. This is probably an element which will make the people of Ticino – who have tended to be rather sceptical on such matters – gradually warm to this idea.

Interview: Giuseppe Rusconi

High-speed trains (TGV)

Franco-Swiss links: the moment of truth

The Jura mountain range forms a natural barrier between Switzerland and the French regions of Franche-Comté and Rhône-Alpes. Better communications is the main demand of the inhabitants of this vast region, which is united by a common language and culture. The European Union is also committed to developing a high-speed railway network. In 1991, France published a master plan, including many new TGV links with its neighbours.

Cross-border bodies, especially the Council of the Léman Region and the Jura Working Committee, are also engaged in modernising public transport throughout the region. They are in fact spoilt for choice amongst the projects being studied, and they also have diverging interests. In addition, government

financial resources are increasingly scarce. The moment of truth for Switzerland has come, since France and Italy have now agreed to give priority to the TGV trans-Alpine line from Lyon to Turin by the Mont Cenis tunnel well south of Switzerland, with branch lines to Chambéry and Annecy. At the same time, studies are now underway with some urgency for the Rhine to Rhône TGV with three branches: towards Paris, Lyon and Mulhouse/Basle.

For the moment at any rate, Switzerland's official position has not changed from that worked out during the discussions on the new trans-Alpine railway lines. This was based on links to the French TGV network by way of Basle and Geneva and came about mainly because France had included the future

Mâcon–Geneva line in its master plan. This project was to be financed mainly from private sources, and it would have been important for Switzerland's French-speaking cantons, since it would have revitalised the Simplon line. The latter is of prime importance for linking western and north-western Switzerland and the Berne region with southern Europe.

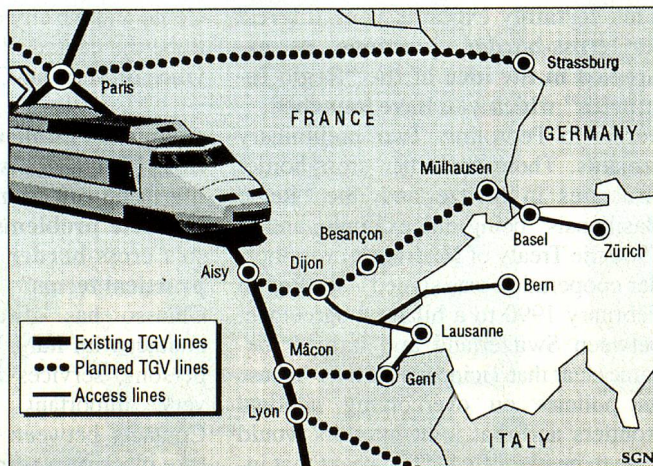
But the Franco-Italian Mont Cenis project has aroused enthusiasm in the Rhône-Alpes region, while the Mâcon–Geneva line has been losing steam. For Geneva and the French departments of Ain and Haute-Savoie, the link-up at Chambéry via Annecy now seems like the lesser evil – although hardly convenient.

Vaud, Neuchâtel and Jura, north-western Switzerland, Berne and Zurich can be satisfied that the Rhine to Rhône TGV line is now taking practical form. This strengthens the advantages of the French Dole–Vallorbe network, serving Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Berne. The Jura Working Committee is at present studying how to improve these lines in order to bring them closer in time to Paris and the Channel tunnel.

On the Swiss side, however, all railway projects are being scaled down, and most local authorities are at present more interested in defending existing regional lines.

Anne-Marie Ley

The link to the French high-speed rail network has enormous importance for Switzerland. It will decide the future of the Simplon line and lead to much shorter travelling times. The journey from Paris to Zurich will be reduced from today's 6 hours to 3¼ hours.



Swiss Graphics News